The Best Bit

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The Best Bit

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Stuck at a charity dinner with bad company and worse wine, Lee finds a pleasant distraction in the form of Jacob. Lee might be a little loud for Jacob, and Jacob might not be enough of a bear for Lee, but with enough booze, they might both find reasons to work around that.

Notes

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charity copy

Lee pulled at his collar. He couldn't remember the last time he'd worn a suit and tie. Well, the last time other than the funeral of someone he knew from group, or from the hospital. The thought made him feel simultaneously happy and sad. He had gained and lost so many friends since his first diagnosis, but he couldn't feel bad that he wasn't dead too. That the treatment had worked for him, that he'd gone into remission and had now been cancer free for over three years. They wouldn't want him to either, he knew that. Maybe it was luck, maybe it was fate, but more likely it was just something in their individual complex biologies that meant what he liked to call "the Miracle Cure" had worked for him.

It was all very sobering so Lee pushed it from his mind. He had found life easier, happier even, with the thought of death looming. When you had to live there was so much pressure to do things, maybe even worthwhile things. So the worthwhile thing he had settled on was raising money for the hospice he had spent some time in. They did good work, and were always struggling. Health care was always going to be luxury level expensive rather than affordable for all, the least he could do was give some of his free time here and there.

Though this was perhaps a little more than he had bargained for. A charity dinner with wealthy assholes. Or as Jenny, his date and manager at the hospice referred to them - potential benefactors. This was one of those swanky dinner and auction deals thrown by some group of rich housewives once a year to make them feel better about their obscene lifestyles. Not that Lee could blame them, he could maybe consider a nip and tuck if he had the money.

They had taken their seats at one of the smaller, less glam tables near the back of the room. Tonight was all about the richies showing off how much they could afford to give away and playing keeping up with the Joneses with their pocket books. Jenny had been every year for the last few years, one of the members of the board for the hospice was some well heeled friend of the women who organised the event. And as much as Lee's collar itched, and the company - other than Jenny - seemed to invariably both suck and blow (but not in a good way), he was resigned to the fact that they were there to schmooze in the hopes of bringing back some good news to the hospice.

Jenny spent five minutes muttering under her breath before Lee asked her what she was doing. She pulled up her phone, that had been discreetly in her lap and flashed it at him - inspirational quotes about charity, ways to get people to donate, secure that fundraising. She resumed reading through the quotes, muttering them as though rehearsing them, before Lee had enough and pulled the phone out of her hand.

"This is god awful. You can't use any of these." He flicked his finger over the screen. "*'If you haven't any charity in your heart, You have the worst kind of heart trouble.'* Bob Hope!" He laughed and passed the phone back, shaking his head.

*

The man at the next table had an attention-catching laugh and Jacob couldn't decide if it was in a bad way or good way. He swayed towards good when he looked over and saw the way the man's jaw moved as he chuckled. It was sort of captivating and it took Jacob a minute to pull his gaze away.

He knew that really, he was just looking for a distraction. This was the first formal function he had been to since discovering he had a daughter, attending her wedding, helping her through her divorce, and then consoling her when her step-father died. In fact, it was the first time he'd been away from his *new* family. But this trip was important if they were to keep the Trust going and keep supporting the orphanage. It was the board that had decided there was money in the United States, but he didn't disagree with them. And this dinner was evidence enough - so lavish, such finery he had rarely seen. Certainly a different life than the one he had lived in India.

The thought made him uncomfortable and anxious. He was never meant to be the face of the orphanage, of the trust, and now he was just that for the whole thing. He could do it, of course, the facts and figures were stored in his head, along with little reminders of how to interact with rich adults rather than poor children. He didn't think it would still be this hard after the few years that had passed.

He sighed heavily, which drew the attention of the woman sitting next to him. He politely excused himself and went to the bar, loosening his tie as he walked but knowing he could do little more - it wouldn't do to take it off altogether.

*

Considering the ostentatious nature of the event, the table wine was practically swill. After two rather full glasses of it Lee decided to investigate whether the bar had anything better to offer. The fact that it coincided with the rather lovely looking gentleman at the next table, who he was sure was checking him out, going to the bar was purely coincidence. Or so he would claim when the inevitable dirty look from Jenny came his way.

For being swill, the wine was surprisingly strong, and he felt a little head rush when he stood. But he enjoyed being mildly tipsy - it was something he strove for often - he considered tipsy to be his optimum self. He centred himself a little before starting for the bar.

Being at the back of the room, their table was conveniently close, so he only had a short distance to take in the other man. His suit was passable, looked like he didn't wear it often from the level of comfort he was in, or rather discomfort. He was disarmingly attractive in the way of someone who had no real idea how attractive they truly were, but he looked sort of sad. That set off a warning bell. Lee tried to avoid sad where at all possible, and they guy really wasn't quite his type. Still, the wine was terrible…

"You've given up on the wine as well?" Lee asked as he stepped up to the bar.

The man startled slightly but then nodded and frowned. "This isn't really my sort of thing." He held up his bottled beer as an indication of his meaning. Which Lee took to mean the man was going to get drunk, given his down demeanor.

And now he was trapped, because if there was one thing Lee couldn't do, it was leave a sad person to drink alone. He hopped up onto the tall barstool and ordered a large glass of the fantastic red he could see behind the bar.

"So, you're from Europe?" Lee asked.

"Denmark." Was the curt reply. "Feels a very long way from here."

"Yes, well… it is of course." He stopped his words there before inserting something that he knew he'd find incredibly witty but experience told him, others often found mildly offensive. He seemed to care a lot more about not offending people now that he had been given a reprieve on his death sentence.

The man was looking at him as though he might already be drunk or a little crazy and Lee mused he was a little correct on both counts.

"I'm Lee." He held out his hand which the man tentatively took.

"Jacob."

*

Jacob didn't consider himself easily charmed. When he was younger he'd had one big love and when that had become too real, too difficult, he had stayed in India. He had avoided life. The man at the bar did not avoid life - that much was clear.

He drank down a glass of wine quicker than Jacob had ever seen anyone do so before, despite the fact that he had first made a show of smelling it and tasting it like it was the finest wine on god's green earth.

He had been shushed by the closest table to them when he had laughed wildly at something he himself had said, and that Jacob was not too sure of.

And even so, they had managed to ascertain what each other did, why they were there and that the problem with society was that living was too expensive in general.

Jacob was another two beers in when a petite blonde lady approached the bar and sternly spoke with his new friend. Lee nodded with fake solemnity whilst clearly trying to hide the massive grin on his face and failing miserably. The end was that she rolled her eyes at him, he pulled her into a hug, she smiled at Lee, Lee smiled back, she eyed Jacob with some level of blame for whatever the problem was, and then she left.

"My boss for the evening," Lee grinned. "She's lovely. I do feel bad that I left her to it, but really I'm not very good at these things. I was just here to give her moral support. But I would have just put people off with my mouth." The words were a little slurred both by the drink and Lee's seemingly permanent grin.

"I think your mouth is just fine!" Jacob found himself saying. He blushed a little and looked away, glared at the almost empty beer bottle as though it was to blame.

Lee was laughing, and yes Jacob now found that laugh pretty delightful. He was clearly one of those guys used to being found attractive. Maybe he went to bars and hooked up with other good looking guys. Jacob stopped the train of thought and looked up, to find Lee looking at him curiously.

“Did I cheer you up?” he asked.

“Sorry?”

“When I came over, you seemed sad. You clearly don’t want to be here.”

Jacob shrugged. “I have to be here. I am finalising some funding, but I’m happy enough.”

“Oh.”

“I mean… I recently found out I have a grown up daughter that I knew nothing about and now we work together in Denmark and I’ve uprooted my life of two decades in India to do so… but…” Jacob let the words spill out.

“Well, yeah. When you put it like that, life is pretty peachy.” Lee’s smile was tentative and lopsided.

Jacob smiled. “I just have had a lot of change. There are lots of things I miss and things that I am not used to. Like tonight, this is not my sort of thing.”

“What is your sort of thing?” Lee looked at him intently.

“Playing football with the kids, I guess. Helping people. Sometimes I like to go running - though that is a very hot pastime in India.” Jacob smiled freely.

“Yes, very hot I imagine.” Lee grinned and Jacob wasn’t entirely sure how to take it. So he cleared his throat and looked around the room, which appeared to be almost completely empty.

“When did it end?”

“When Jenny came over and said goodbye.” Lee hadn’t stopped grinning. The grin downgraded to a warm smile and he seemed to look Jacob up and down appraisingly before downing the last quarter of wine in his glass. “Are you staying at the hotel?”

“No, not here, a cheaper one down the street.”

“I’ll walk you.”

*

Lee found Jacob to be complex. When he talked about things he loved he lit up, and Lee fed off that type of happiness as if it were honey. But he seemed so, ok not sad, that had been the wrong appraisal - just lost. Trying to fit into his new life. Lee understood. He’d moved around a lot over the years, and of course then there was the cancer - which had made life

unsettled. Until he had accepted that fact and decided to lead an unsettled, untethered life. A habit he was still trying to work out whether he wanted to break or not.

He was thinking this as he looked over at Jacob, walking next to him. He let out a light chuckle and the Dane turned to him with a curious look, which Lee dismissed with his hand.

“Don’t mind me.”

“What?” Jacob’s tone was curious but not offended.

Lee considered for a moment. “If you must know I was just thinking about how you’re not really quite my type.”

Jacob frowned and gave a sort of uneasy smile in response.

“Oh, I mean. Not that I was expecting… I liked talking with you but I didn’t think…” He tried to backpedal. Jacob had an ex-wife and kid, maybe he was completely straight.

“What is your type?” Jacob ignored Lee’s floundering and asked the question with obvious curiosity.

“Oh y’know… bears. Big, hairy guys. Like… big!” Lee went on tiptoes and lumbered with his arms up and clawed doing his best impression of an actual bear. Which at the least earned him a smile.

“Surely they eat you alive.” Jacob smiled.

“Oh yes. Usually that’s the best bit.” Lee grinned. He had to stifle a surprised laugh when a blush rose up Jacob’s face - realisation dawning on the man. He wore the blush well and Lee found it pretty endearing.

There was a few moments of silent walking until finally Jacob stopped outside a small hotel. “I’m staying here.” He seemed nervous and Lee sunk deeper into the adoration he was feeling.

“Ok, well. I should let you get to bed.” Lee ran his tongue out over his now dry lips. He had thought to say something suggestive, maybe invite himself up and see where it got him, but he found he wasn’t much in the mood for a quick fuck. Not with Jacob at least. And not because he wasn’t attracted to him. Worse, it was because he was.

“I’m here all week, would you… We could…” Jacob swallowed audibly.

“I go running in the park down from here every morning. Currently training for a charity race. I could swing by and call on you, if you fancied some early exercise.” The words came out entirely filthy even though he hadn’t intended them too. Lee rolled his eyes at himself and face palmed. “It’s the wine! I blame the wine.”

Jacob laughed, a musical and light thing that warmed Lee and made him look up, just as Jacob moved forward. The Dane’s lips pressed against his before he had chance to react, one hand at Lee’s hip, the other running behind his neck. It had the dual effect of holding him

close and keeping him away at the same time. Lee tried not to read too much into that, but then that was mostly because he was already considering how to deal with the practicalities of uprooting and moving to Denmark. He'd always wanted to see Europe.

Jacob drew back from the kiss, his eyes had taken on a dreamy sort of look, or maybe it was the wine again. Either way, Lee was feeling pretty much on the fence about the whole untethered business. Especially when Jacob leaned in close to his ear and murmured -

"My chest is fairly thick with hair you know… and I consider myself… big."

Lee suddenly found himself bereft of all witty one-liners. He blamed the wine.

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